

音使 いは死と踊る

Anonymus dance with death.

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Novels

Illustration

OVERLAP

OTOTSUKAI WA SHI TO ODORU

– Anonymous dance with death –

- Book 2 -

PRESSURE

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Anonymous dance with death.

——ようこそ、

アノニマスへ。

CHAPTER 17

A BEGINNING PRESSURE

“I’ll visit you every day!”

That’s what I declared to Roll, but it appears that I won’t be able to keep my promise.

I felt a strong need to apologize to Roll, as I read an illustrated encyclopedia with the title of ‘The magical beasts inhabiting the Basara Woodland’.

There is a desert area in the far west of our city, called the Basara Desert. It would take about two days straight to get there by car.

Right in the middle of the Basara Desert, there’s a luxuriant woodland surrounded by the huge sea of sand.

It is an oasis where vegetation grew in abundance.

I am currently looking down at this scenery from 1000 meters in the sky.

The noise coming from the helicopter’s propeller is nothing but loud.

The incredibly hot sunrays blazed down on me.

It was so hot I thought I would melt.

One thought has uninterruptedly bothered me the whole day.

It’s about me not being able to visit Roll in the hospital.

I felt really, really sorry for Roll.

I repeat. It appears that I won’t be able to visit Roll at all.

That’s because, starting today, it was decided that I would have to survive for an entire month inside the woodlands spreading under my eyes.

Yes, together with Tameiki-san.

In order to tell you how it came to this, I’ll have to go back in time a little bit.

It all happened the day before yesterday, in the evening, after I received an email from Tameiki-san.



I didn't conceal my confusion when I received that mysterious email from Tameiki-san.

The email only said '*Come*', and I didn't know what that meant.

Where?

Why?

All the important information was cut out.

Wait a second.

If I think about it, this might be a mistake. Maybe Tameiki-san sent it to me by mistake. This kind of simple message can only be sent to someone who understands what that '*Come*' means.

It has to be this.

I then pressed the reply button. I only wanted to write '*You mistook the receiver's address*', but I looked over my reply message again.

It kind of left unfriendly.

Tameiki-san saved us yesterday, so I'll add a few words of thanks as well.

It's not quite great to thank people via emails, but I'll properly express my gratitude when I meet with Tameiki-san again.

But the thing is I never met Tameiki-san inside the organization before.

'You mistook the receiver's address.

And also, I feel a bit ashamed for saying this in an email, but I want to thank you for saving us yesterday.'

I looked over my reply message again.

Good.

This should be all right.

I pressed the send button, then entered the training room.

Immediately after, my phone's ringtone resounded again.

The sender was Tameiki-san.
It was a surprisingly fast reply.
Astonished, I opened the email in order to check its text.

It, again, only contained the word '*Come*'.

“.....”

It appears that I must to go Tameiki-san's place.
Seeing this a second time, it meant that it wasn't the wrong address.

The organization's no. 2 is calling for me.
I was a little scared, but I had to go.

Because it only said to come, it also meant that all the necessary information can be deduced some way or another.
I don't know the reason behind this, but if I was to ask about the place, it has to be Tameiki-san's room.

But where is Tameiki-san's room?
Unlike the members' email addresses, our room numbers are not shared among us, so I don't know where Tameiki-san's room is.

I might have to go ask Roll about this.
I thought about it as I left the training room, but that's when I came across the Boss.

“Shion?
I'm sorry about what happened yesterday.”

The first thing he said was an apology, so I kind of panicked.
He was talking about our mission.

“No, I must also apologize for failing the mission. It all happened because I stood in Roll's way.”

“That's, well, let's not talk about past things.”

“Right.....”

“So, Shion, you’re training even without Roll being around? That’s the spirit.”

I haven’t started yet though. Tameiki-san’s email hindered my training.
I know. The Boss might know where Tameiki-san is.
I’ll ask him.

“I was just about to start my training.
.....Can I ask you something?”

“Yeah, sure. Ask me anything.”

“Do you know where Tameiki-san is right now?”

“Tameiki?
Don’t tell me that person already summoned you!?”

“Eh? That’s what happened though.
What do you mean by already?”

Guessing by his way of speaking, it seems like the Boss understands something that I don’t.
Anyway, I told the Boss about Tameiki-san email, which only said ‘*Come*’.
Listening to my story, he stifled his smile and answered me.

“Tameiki is in the cafeteria. We just finished talking.
That person...Ain’t Tameiki hasty now for a change!?”

“Why am I being summoned?”

“You’ll know once you get there. Good luck, then.”

The Boss only said this, then he turned around and walked away.
What do you mean by good luck.....!?

At any rate, I’ll just have to go meet with Tameiki-san.
I’m a bit nervous, to be honest.



The Anonymous headquarters even has a facility used as a cafeteria. This place is just uselessly big. They remodeled it again, or so it seems. I came here a few times before together with Roll, but it's the first time I came here alone.

There are a lot of people around.

The Anonymous headquarters doesn't only have fighters, but also spies, cooks, cleaners, researchers and so on. That's why the cafeteria is always bustling with energy.

I surveyed the cafeteria with my eyes, looking for Tameiki-san. Having done so, I immediately found what I was looking for.

Tameiki-san was sitting loosely on a sofa somewhere in the back of the cafeteria.

With an incredibly sluggish expression, she half opened her eyes and was looking at me now.

.....At any rate, I'll just go there.

I had a feeling that I needed to hurry, so I walked towards Tameiki-san with a fast pace. I stopped in front of her and decided to first greet her.

"Good-good evening. I'm Shion."

"I know."

I gulped down my saliva.

What's with this sense of intimidation!

I was completely overwhelmed by this superior existence in front of me. Tameiki-san sat there, wearing the same clothes she did yesterday.

Is it all right to call this sitting though?

Her posture is so shallow, she's already close to lying down.

Her long black hair is spread around the back of the sofa.

When I look closer at her, she's incredibly beautiful, this person.....
It's the first time we met like this, so I didn't know it.

I have a feeling that her beauty is sometimes ruined by her personality, and in addition to that, her beauty is not at all seductive.

This is bad.
She paused the conversation and didn't continue.

I'll first thank her for saving us yesterday.

"Tameiki-san, thank you for coming to our rescue yesterday."

"....."

No reaction. Tameiki-san's pulse was slow and restful.
This silence lasted a while longer.

".....So, what do you want to talk to me about?"

Since we couldn't stay silent forever, I broke the ice and asked about my main concern.
Thereupon, Tameiki-san stood up slowly.
Without thinking, I put myself on guard.

She let out a long yawn, rubbed her eyes and combed her hair upwards with one hand.

Then, that hand she used for combing her hair became blurred.

"Gaah.....!?"

Before I could notice, Tameiki-san's fist hit me in my stomach.
That's when I lost my senses.



My body was shaking.
When I opened my eyes, I realized that I was sitting in a car's passenger's seat.
With the lights on, the car was running on a highway.

I looked through the window, but everything was dark, so I couldn't see anything. I didn't comprehend my situation so I was kind of confused, when I realized that Tameiki-san was sitting in the driver's seat. She was driving with her eyes barely opened; she seemed rather sleepy.

When I saw her, my memories from right before losing consciousness came back to me vividly.

"Did you wake up?"

"What! What are you doing??"

"Haa, you're too loud."

I unintentionally yelled, but Tameiki-san's words made my spirit wither instantly.

"Forgive me. What is going on?"

"One month starting now. In short, while Roll is under medical care, I will be looking after you."

"Eh!?"

It's a joke, right?

Tameiki-san is going to look after me?

Who decided this.....!?

The Boss.....! He did have a knowing look on his face, precisely because they talked about this.....!

"If you have complaints, talk to Heid. He only told me to look after you, so I'll do just that, in my own way."

".....Is this for real?"

"If you don't like it, you can scurry home. Although, we are about 300 km away from the city."

I am lost for words.

I was dragged into something unthinkable without any kind of warning.
Tameiki-san is going to look after me?
What is she gonna do to me?
Besides, where are we going?

“Where are we going then?”

“To Basara Woodland.”

“Basara Woodland!?”

“You’re too loud.”

“.....Sorry.”

No way!

That Basara Woodland is ridiculously far away, and it’s inhabited by swarms of dangerous magical beasts.

Why are we going there for?

Also, the restraint ring on my finger is gone.....

“We’ll stop by a few branch offices on our way to Basara Woodland.

We’re going to use a helicopter midway.

Also, I threw away your restraint ring. Don’t rely on that thing.”

“You threw it away!?”

What is this woman doing!

“Too loud.”

“Sorry.”

“Until we get there, learn everything in this book.”

She said, then tossed me an illustrated encyclopedia with a title of ‘The magical beasts inhabiting the Basara Woodland’.

It was a pretty thick book.

“.....”

I was lost for words once again.

“.....Why are we going as far as Basara Woodland for?
Is this a raw materials supply mission or something?”

I asked this, and Tameiki-san shook her head lazily before she answered.

“During this whole month, I’ll make you as strong as possible.
In other words, this is your training.”

And so, 38 hours from now I’ll be in a helicopter above the Basara Woodland.

CHAPTER 18

THE PRESSURE OF FALLING DOWN

My training started with something that was meant to test my resistance to air pressure, which was a free fall.

I could never possibly have imagined that I would be forced to drop down from 1000 meters in the sky, so right now I am screaming with all my might.

“AAAAARRGHHHHH!!!”

This height doesn’t even compare to that of a sky scraper. The ground is too far away.

The one who tricked me into this was obviously that person. Tameiki-san. Tameiki-san is falling-down next to me, a composed expression on her face.

I coooompletely let my guard down.

These past two days, I could barely sleep. And on the way here, because of the piled up fatigue, the sleep assaulted me. Even though the destination was right above the corner.

Before I became aware of it, I started to fall in a doze and I was immediately in the land of dreams.

Then, I felt a strange feeling of falling down and opened my eyes, only to find myself bathing in the sky.....I was sky diving.

Naturally, I was quite shocked. So much so that I almost wet myself.

Rather, it was impossible not to be shocked by this.

When I opened my eyes, I was sky diving; I’m afraid I am the only one who ever experienced something like this.

I got treated this way even after being left with a trauma for “falling” due to my last mission.

I’ve long since realized it, but Tameiki-san is an outrageous person.

But now isn’t the time for this. The ground is already getting close.

.....Well, as one would expect, Tameiki-san will most likely do something about the landing.

I have no means to properly land and if she doesn't help me I'll definitely die.

I embraced this hope and looked at Tameiki-san. That's when she opened her mouth. The words that came out next frightened me even more.

She said, in a very quiet voice that no one could've picked up but me. That I was responsible for my own landing.

"You gotta be kidding, Tameiki-san!?"

"Don't be passive. Take action."

What action can I possibly take in mid-air!? It has no shit to do with being passive.

Damn it.....! What should I do?
There's nothing I can do!

I have no way of softening the landing impact.
If I slam into the ground from this height, I'll certainly die.

Think.

I can't believe the fact that Tameiki-san would demand something that was impossible to achieve, no matter how unbelievable she was.
There must be something to help me break out of this deadlock.

It's useless. The ground is getting closer and closer.
I can't think of anything.

"I can't do it! Please save me!!"

I shouted, amplifying the sound of my voice.
In such circumstances, if I didn't do that Tameiki-san wouldn't have heard me.
I could still understand her even if she talked in a quiet voice, but Tameiki-san couldn't possibly do the same.

"Sigh.....Don't behave like a spoiled child."

What's wrong with this person!

Well, if this is how it is.....

Then, there's nothing else to do but this!

“Excuse me!!”

I stretched my arms and got a hold of Tameiki-san's wrist, then I pulled her towards me. After that, I embraced Tameiki-san with all my strength.

Unlike me, Tameiki-san surely has the means for a safe landing.
If I hug her like this, she will be forced to land together with me.
In short, I won't have to land by myself.

If she forcibly separates herself from me I'll be done for, but in order to not let this happen, I held her very tightly.

“.....!”

I know that I shouldn't really be thinking about this right now, but Tameiki-san smelled extremely good.
Besides, her body felt quite thin. Nevertheless, a pair of well-rounded mounds were firmly putting an emphasis on their existence.

Since I was hugging Tameiki-san from up front, I naturally ended up burying my face in that pair of mounds.
I was in a position that if Tameiki-san were to move up her knee, I would be instantly knocked down.

“I'm so sorry! I'm not doing it on purpose! It's the air pressure! The force is irresistible!”

I raised my voice, my face still buried in Tameiki-san's chest.

“Stop it. Don't talk. It tickles.”

I desperately prayed that she wouldn't shake me off.

I closed my eyes.
We'll very soon be landing.

The dark feeling of falling down.
However, it suddenly ended.
A strange floating sensation enveloped me.

Once I opened my eyes, I realized that the ground wasn't approaching as quickly as before.

We were now surrounded by huge trees, while the smell and the air seemed different.

"We're here."

Tameiki-san said and the strange floating sensation vanished, as we landed.

I believe that this was Tameiki-san's ability.

If I remember correctly, Tameiki-san is an ability user who can control gravity. If she controls gravity, then what she just did had something to do with it.

Anyway, it seems that my avoidance method was the passing mark. Whether there was some other way in those circumstances, apart from clinging to Tameiki-san or not, I decided to set it aside.

"How much longer will you stick to me? Get off."

I was told and I hurriedly let go of Tameiki-san.

"Sorry.....!"

Tameiki-san didn't seem to have an interest in my apology and, for some reason, she looked up to the sky and started to wander aimlessly.

I looked up as well, wondering what she was looking at, and I saw a small spot in the sky from an opening through the tree leaves.

It was getting bigger and bigger.

A wind-cutting sound.

Something was falling towards us.

That falling object was dropping at an incredible speed and, before long, it started to be sucked up towards Tameiki-san's hand.

Even though it fell at such an incredible speed, it didn't even have any impact.

The falling object came out to be a large backpack. Tameiki-san's luggage that she kept in the helicopter.

Come to think of it, I didn't bring any luggage with me. Since I was basically kidnapped, it couldn't have been helped.

She even confiscated my work phone, saying something about severing communication with the outside world.

Thanks to this, I can't even send one message to Roll. It was quite a troubling situation. I really wanted her to at least let me send one message to apologize to Roll.

"First of all, we'll walk towards the camp house close to the lake."

She said and held the backpack she just caught out for me to hold it. It was too troublesome for her to carry it.

Anyway, is there really a camp house here?

I thought that she would force me to camp outside, but I'm glad it won't happen.

"Understood."

I took the backpack.

The backpack seemed light when Tameiki-san held it, but it actually had an unusual weight; I somehow managed to put it on my back though. Then, I followed Tameiki-san who started to walk right away.

We advanced in this sea of trees, both of us dressed in our tuxedos. It was amazing how out-of-place we seemed.

Other than that, there were these astonishing 'sounds'.

From all over the place, from every possible direction, the howls, roars and shrieks of magical beasts could be heard.

Only by listening to these sounds, you could picture the vast numbers of magical beasts inhabiting this sea of trees.

.....What if we encounter a dangerous magical beast all of a sudden!? I decided to stay alert to the surrounding sounds.

"We're here."

After we walked for a while, we arrived at the camp house Tameiki-san talked about. It was more or less covered in ivy and moss, but the camp house looked prettier than I expected.

The area surrounding the camp house was mostly deforested, so the place looked rather opened.

I see.

Even though the weeds are overgrown, this space here is good for movement.

I watched as Tameiki-san opened the door to the camp house and entered it, then I followed her.

However, the moment I entered the house, she kicked me out.

I fell on my buttocks just outside the door.

The spot where my hand landed on the ground was filled with crawling insects.

Honestly, this didn't really surprise me.

I thought about the reason why Tameiki-san just kicked me out.

Was it because I entered with my shoes on?

No, Tameiki-san did the same.

I thought about various things for a while, but in the end I didn't understand why she kicked me out, so I looked up at Tameiki-san, who was now looking down at me, in order to find my answer.

Our eyes met and immediately after she began to speak.

"You're camping. For the whole month."

So, this is how it'll be?

Well, I was actually fine with it, since I came here prepared for camping outside.

But I wanted her to wait.

Did Tameiki-san plan to sleep on the bed I just saw through the brief opening of the door?

"Only me?"

I asked, discontent showing on my entire face.

“It’s your training.”

“Please wait. As one would expect, being here alone through the night is scary and disheartening.”

“It’s training.”

“Please.

At least the first two nights, camp outside together with me.”

It was an earnest request.

“You want to make a woman sleep outside?”

“A woman? I don’t think that you’re the type of person who would bring that up as an excuse.”

I only realized it after I said it.

.....Damn it!

I said something I shouldn’t have.

“.....”

Tameiki-san was silent.

Did I just.....hurt her feelings?

No, it’s unimaginable that something like this could possibly hurt her.
Anyway, I need a followup.

“What I wanted to say is not that I don’t consider you a woman. What I was referring to was your character, you know?

I do think that you are a very beautiful woman, so please don’t misunderstand me!”

“.....Just what are you talking about?

Sigh.

Heid did press upon me a weird guy.”

Tameiki-san said, then she closed the door of the camp house with a thud.

.....Just now, did Tameiki-san feel awkward? I have the impression she talked a little faster than usual.

After a short while, the door of the camp house opened again, and a sleeping bag came out tumbling from that crack.

Perhaps, Tameiki-san is a much more interesting person than I previously thought.

Thus, my training began.



Tameiki-san is probably a more interesting person than I thought.
It was a moment when I really meant this.

Now, I take it back.

Tameiki-san is, as I thought, a very dangerous person.

“Just please, please don’t do this. I’ll do anything, even sleep outside by myself.”

I desperately begged Tameiki-san.

Right now, she is stuffing my both ears with two small rubber-like earplugs.

At first sight, they appeared like normal earplugs.

However, these earplugs were made of a material that would firmly stick to the ear’s mucous membrane, and they can only come off by using a special lotion.

Because of these unbelievable gum-like earplugs, my sense of hearing went down about 90%.

Tameiki-san said that I had to wear these weird earplugs for the entire month.
To put things bluntly, I’ll die.

At this point, my sense of hearing was barely functional for making conversation.
This way it’ll be difficult for me to sense any sort of threat.

Moreover, I was inside the Basara Woodlands, which is basically a nest of magical beasts.

I'll die.

"But it'll be troublesome if earwax accumulates....."

"Once your training's over, I'll clean them up for you."

For real!?

I was about to ask this but I stopped.

What's with this person? She's using temptation?

But I won't be lured by this.

First of all, if Tameiki-san ends up cleaning my ears, she'll most likely thrust in so deep that she'll reach the ossicles and it'll be all over.

I definitely can't entrust my ears to her.

"I'll refrain."

"I see.

Then, let's have a serious talk now."

Because Tameiki-san's air suddenly changed, I instinctively corrected my posture.

".....What is it?"

Tameiki-san's eyelids, which usually were only half opened, lifted up a bit and she started to speak.

"I intend to train you as seriously as I can.

Normally, this would've never happened.

It is very rare for me to feel motivated and I'm quite shocked myself because of it.

And I don't even feel like sighing."

"....."

"First, we have to do something about your annoying attack.

An ability user who can only attack in all directions indiscriminately. That's meaningless. It's not worth going on missions with you.
You'll end up doing extermination missions your whole life all by yourself."

That's my trashy reputation.

But I can't say anything to defend myself, since precisely because of this Roll ended up in such a sorry state.

More than that, it was actually the truth.

"If your power is sound, then, first, you'll have to be able to control the strength and directionality of your sound.

You need the power to only attack the enemy you aim at.

.....But, there's something you need to do before that.

You must learn to sense the sound with every piece of your body.

If you're a sound ability user, you must become able to feel the sound with all your other four senses, apart from hearing."

I see.

So these earplugs are precisely for this.

Reduce my hearing sense in order to sharpen all my other senses.

"Like watching the sound with my eyes, feeling the sound with my skin, smelling the sound with my nose and tasting the sound with my tongue?"

"Right.

I as well, when I manifested my 'gravity control' ability, which is quite a difficult one to handle, I walked the same path as you.

During my manifestation, I killed about double the amount of people than you did."

For real?

How should I put it? I kind of.....feel an affinity to her now.

"That's why I can give you accurate advice.

Well, in short, this is it.

Listen to what I say."

At the end, Tameiki-san muttered.

“It’s been a while since I talked this much.”

It appears that Tameiki-san truly intends to make me stronger.

This determination of hers reached me.

I felt a little happy.

After she told me this much I have no choice but to properly listen to her.

“Understood, master.

I’ll do everything you say.”

I can’t possibly lose in a battle of motivation against Tameiki-san, since it was me who decided that I needed to get stronger.

“Don’t call me that.”

“Please let me call you master.”

“No. Listen to what I say.”

“Then, what about senpai?”

“Sigh.....”

CHAPTER 19

AN ABSURD PRESSURE

“In the process of getting stronger, there is something that everyone can easily do.
That is to not talk during battle.

Don't open your mouth.

Those guys who talk continuously during battle are not strong enough and they'll die
a useless death.

However, Roll talks a lot, doesn't she? Why do you think she does that?”

That's true.

During the last mission, while in battle, Roll talked to me quite a bit.

I wonder why.

“.....I don't know.”

“If she doesn't talk, she can't convey the things she wants to convey to you.

What does my partner want to do, how will she move next?

Feel these things without the need for words.”

“Yes!”

The first day of my training started with a lecture.

Tameiki-san was a great teacher.

She talked in a manner that was easy to follow and understand.

I frantically took notes of everything Tameiki-san said.

Because it'll be troublesome if I forget these things later on.

Tameiki-san said that it wasn't necessary to take notes since she'll talk to me again
whenever she notices something, but in order to always be able to remember her
words, taking notes was essential.

It seems that she felt a bit embarrassed because of me taking notes of her words, so
she kept on glancing at my notes sheet for a while now.

It appears that she has a shy side as well.

The heartless and cruel image I had of Tameiki-san was already cleared away. She's difficult to understand but she has quite a lot of emotional ups and downs.

Tameiki-san's lecture finished after a short while then we took our luggage and walked towards the lake.

The lake was in about a five minutes reach if we walked.

Timewise, it was now close to sunset.

The sun was gradually setting and we were walking towards the horizon.

But we obviously couldn't see the horizon.

When we came close to the lake, Tameiki-san lowered her stance as she continued to advance.

She then turned her head to me and made a gesture for me to carefully walk next to her.

Is there something around here? I couldn't know since my hearing sense was now below that of a normal human.

I felt like my eyes were covered.

I moved next to Tameiki-san and, in the same manner as her, I peeked ahead through the thicket.

Having done so, a huge lake spread as far as I could see with the naked eye.

It was so huge that I couldn't see from one shore to the other.

This lake was beautiful, with the rays of the setting sun shining on its surface though the dense forest.

Tameiki-san poked me with her elbow and I change the direction of my look.

Thereupon, I saw a magical beast drinking water on the lake's shore.

That is, if I'm not mistaken.....a Crimson Puma.....!

It isn't a massive magical beast but it is extremely dangerous.

The Crimson Puma is a carnivorous magical beast, one that has a superior position in the Basara Woodlands' ecosystem.

Perhaps because this thing is here that the lake is actually peaceful.

Since it is a waterfront, this place should've been flooded with magical beasts.

"What is important is that you see through what means danger and what not.

There are many things that are not as dangerous as you think they are.”

Tameiki-san saw how I stared at the Crimson Puma and said this to me in a low voice. In this case, the Crimson Puma is certainly a dangerous being.

“.....Look crosswise behind the Crimson Puma. Can you see it?”

I moved my eyes towards where she pointed.

However, there was nothing but thicket.....

“.....!”

No, there’s something there.

There was something behind that thicket which surveyed the area with glittering eyes.....And they were more than one magical beast.

Those were higher ranked magical beasts in this ecosystem which aimed at the Crimson Puma.....!

The Crimson Puma was drinking water as it stayed alert at its surroundings.

However, the next time it bent to drink water the Crimson Puma’s life ended.

Four Basara Wolves jumped out of the thicket.

The Crimson Puma reacted agilely but it was outnumbered.

It died immediately accompanied by a loud shriek.

The Basara Wolves dragged along the corpse of the Crimson Puma and disappeared behind the thicket.

That’s when Tameiki-san stood up.

I was overwhelmed by the scene from moments ago, so I couldn’t stand for a short while.

“Now that I saw this spectacle, I really think that this woodland is the most suitable place to improve oneself.

In a battle between high ranking ability users, one’s life can basically end with only one killing blow.

This is a world in which the first one to find the enemy is the one who wins.

Don’t give way the lead in battle. You mustn’t hesitate.

You attack with a serious blow from the absolute beginning.”

“Un-understood.”

Then, Tameiki-san continued.

She got out of the thicket and put down the small backpack she carried in one hand.

“Take out all the contents inside this backpack.”

“Eh? Why?”

“Just do it.”

“.....All right.”

As I’ve been told, I took out the contents of the backpack in order.

The first which came out were three survival knives and one wide blade knife, similar to a machete.

Among the survival knives there were small ones and a large one.

They all had leather holders.

The next which came out were tin cans.

Food. An amount that would last for about two days.

The next was a small box. I opened it and inside was a sewing kit.

The rest of the contents were the illustrated encyclopedia that I read inside the helicopter, another illustrated encyclopedia for Basara Woodlands plants and vegetation, a lighter, salt and a compass.

All of these were casually thrown into the backpack.

And, after I investigated the backpack thoroughly, I found another book in a small side pocket; “Survival life starting from scratch”.

“.....”

I already came to understand what she’s going to do to me.

“Good, now put them back.”

As Tameiki-san said, I put all the things back inside the backpack.

“Put the backpack on your back.”

I, again, did as I was told.

“.....Tameiki-san.

I have an extremely bad feeling about this.”

“Shion.

To be honest, I am worried that you might actually die.

However, please understand. I want to make you stronger.

I suppose you didn't think you could become strong without taking any risks, right?”

“I'm sorry, but what are you talking about.....?”

“Ideally would be four days, but I'll even wait for an entire month. I wish you good luck.

Then, see you later.”

Tameiki-san kicked me in the buttocks.

It's not like she kicked me hard or something.

Still, my body took off right away.

Yes, I was flying.

“Woouooooaaah!!”

I was flying above the lake at a tremendous speed.

Four huge fish jumped up from the lake, aiming at me. I barely passed through them and continued to fly.

I saw splashes in various places on the lake.

“AAaaaah!! Don't come!! I'll die! I'll die!”

A flew for a while and I crossed the entire lake, but my flight didn't stop.

I covered my face.

I was assaulted by vegetation and was cut on various places on my exposed skin.

That woman, she actually did it.

She did say she'll do everything possible to make me stronger.

Her motivation was high as well.

But this is wrong whatever the circumstances may be!?

There's no point in training to get stronger if I end up dead!
As I shot through the sea of trees, I dispersed the sound of my amplified screams all around me.
For now, if magical beasts attack me in this situation I'll be certainly done for.
I continued to disperse my shouts filled with anger and threat.
Most likely even Tameiki-san, who was already at a long distance away, could hear these shouts as well.

The tuxedo that Roll proudly gave me was already in tatters.
I felt like crying.

After I advanced for another short while, the strong force that sent me flying finally lessened.
I was approaching the ground now.
Once I touched the ground with my feet, I landed quite cleanly.

"Haaa....., haaa....."

I got tired from all the screaming, so I placed my hands on my knees and tried to catch my breath.
This is terrible. My feet are trembling.

I hit my thighs several times with all my strength and I somehow managed to stop the trembling.
For now, I took out the compass from my backpack.
I came flying from that direction. From east.

I did fly for a long distance.
Just how far am I?
I don't know.

Damn it, can I even go back?
The sun will set very soon. This is bad, this is very bad.

During nighttime, in this state, I'll be fully under the attack of magical beasts.
It's impossible to keep shouting all day, and I'm already fairly tired from using my ability.
My throat is dried-up too.

For the time being I'll just drink some water. I have to calm down.

Thinking about this, I searched through the backpack, but I realized there was no water inside.

"Damn you Tameiki-saaaaaan.....!!"

Tameiki, that bitch, she didn't think water was necessary!

WHY!?

Before considering putting salt in the backpack, she should've thought about water first!

Damn it! Damn you Tameiki-san.....

Aaaaaabsolutely!

I will aaaaabsolutely pay her back.

I will absolutely peek at her while she baths or something!

In order to not let despair overwhelm me in these awful circumstances, I burned with tenacity.

If I motivate myself with the thought of going back to the camp house and peek at Tameiki-san as she baths, I can persevere through all challenges.

"Fuu."

I took a huge breath.

Calm down for now.....I have to calm down. I must regain my composure.

I don't want to use up my physical strength pointlessly.

Think about how to survive in this place.

For the time being, since I continuously shouted a few moments ago, I'd like to believe that the magical beasts in this area were driven away to some degree.

I took out the "Survival life starting from scratch" book from the backpack's side pocket. I'll call it the survival book for now.

First, I wonder what I'm supposed to do in case of disaster or accident.

As I looked through the survival book's table of contents, I felt my surrounding getting darker and darker.

I thought it was strange, so I looked up at the sky.

Having done so, there was a five-meters long, crappy huge spider building its nest.

That is a.....Jim King Spider.

That is the only spider type magical beast inside the Basara Woodlands which builds itself a nest.

It is a rowdy magical beast which, apart from the ones already caught in its nest, it can easily chase its prey on the ground as well. This is a magical beast regarded as very dangerous.

I saw a few magical beasts inside the spider's nest, all of them rolled up in thin thread. Four pairs of cold eyes seized me.

This is very bad.

Before I could think about it, I put the backpack on my back and started running.

CHAPTER 20

A GENTLE PRESSURE

Ten days have passed, but I managed to return to the camp house.

My clothes looked like those of a vagabond.

My entire body was covered in mud, and I looked completely changed.

Finally.

FINALLY.

I finally returned.

Thank goodness.....

These past ten days I felt like I was in hell.

With tears in my eyes, I remembered the things that happened during these ten days.

It all started when a Jim King Spider chased me and I dropped my compass, but then, when I thought that I somehow managed to escape, I found myself almost dragged into the nest of a Sand Worm, which normally only lives in the desert. Afterwards, I was lured by a sweet smell and I very nearly became food for a Devil Plant, a Flash Monkey stole my backpack and when I finally got it back, I ended up inhaling the scales of a Poison Butterfly, so I was forced to search for and make myself an antidote, a Cutter Bird tore my entire body to pieces, so I had to endure the intense pain and stitch up all my open wounds, I fell into a swamp and almost drowned, and I mostly slept in a cave full of White Blood Bats, while concealing my breath.....I ate magic beast dead flesh, I experienced a threatening battle with roaring Thousand Gorillas, a Cannibal Kangaroo licked my face, I almost ended up electrocuted by a Thunder Fish, and I very nearly got swallowed whole by a Basara Snake.....

There is an endless number of occasions when I was very close to death.

If I were to talk about everything that happened during these do-or-die ten days, just how many books would that fill.....!?

I truly did my best to return here alive.

Someone please praise me.

.....Now, don't you think that I need some kind of reward for accomplishing such a great deed?
I believe I do need one.

It wasn't just because of luck that I managed to return here in one piece.
It was in my mind.
I had a clear objective.

My objective, right from the beginning of this survival challenge, was to return safely and peek at Tameiki-san while she takes her bath.
However, before long, I realized that this didn't even begin to compare with what I was going through, so my objective continued to be adjusted upwards.

And so, in the end, my objective changed and was now to return safely and rub Tameiki-san's voluptuous breasts.
I was already more than prepared for her beating.
At this point, if I don't at least get my revenge with this, my heart won't resist and I will break.

Burning with this fierce stubbornness, I rapidly approached the camp house.
Timewise, it was toward morning.
It was the time when birds start their cries.
Maybe Tameiki-san is asleep.

I know. In this case I'll just have to attack her in her sleep.
I'll rub her breasts while she sleeps.

Currently, my mind was filled with polluting thoughts.
This wish of mine was the only thing that kept me alive in this hellish survival training.

I erased any sounds I was making and I began to twist the doorknob to the camp house.
However, the moment I touched the doorknob, I became aware of the presence behind the closed door.

Then, at almost the same time, the door opened violently aiming at hitting me. I quickly took a step back and dodged the attack.

Then I put myself on guard.

Tameiki-san stood in the opened door.

Her hair was ruffled and she looked like she just woke up.

She then looked at me and opened her mouth to speak.

“.....Ten days? You sure took your time.

Where did you wander about?”

Where did I wander about, you say?

This is all your fault!

Rage bubbled out inside of me, filling my entire existence.

Because she dropped me in hell.

“.....Do you want to know?

All the cruel things I endured!?”

“No. I will check it myself.”

Tameiki-san said and then threw a knife at me slowly.

I easily dodged it by moving my body to the side a little, then I rapidly charged at Tameiki-san.

“Hoo!”

I don't intend to play right now.

I've been through some outrageous moments. I need at least one pay-back!

My eyes became bloodshot as I rapidly advanced.

Tameiki-san took out another knife and threw it at me again.

I immediately drew out my pal, the survival knife, from my waist and I blocked the incoming knife, repelling it.

I blocked all the other knives, which came at me flying in succession and I advanced even more.

However, the next knife which she threw at me had a strange weight and it repelled my survival knife.

I fell back at the same time.

Approaching someone without any weapon is too dangerous.

I put some distance between us, but the knives continued to be thrown at me.

Spinning rapidly, they were precisely aimed at my vitals.

However, I weaved my way through the space between the knives, dodging them very closely.

That's when I finally realized it.

Hm? How comes I can dodge this well?

Are the knives too slow?

No, it's an optical illusion. The flying knives are absurdly fast.

I know. I know it now.....

What I need to do in order to avoid the incoming attacks.

The moment I realized this, Tameiki-san's attack stopped.

It seems like she ran out of ammo.

Tameiki-san kicked the ground and quickly approached me.

Then she rushed towards my right side and unleashed a punch from outside my field of vision.

"Fu!"

I bent my body and avoided the impact, then I backflipped and distanced myself from Tameiki-san.

Then I glared at her.

".....!"

That's when I felt a shock running through me.

The reason why was because of Tameiki-san's delightful smile.

Yes, she was smiling.

What's with that innocent smile on her face.....

For the me who only knew Tameiki-san's sour and sluggish expressions, this sweet smile of hers confused me so much that I couldn't hide it.

Besides....., this Tameiki-san is way too adorable when she smiles.....!

However, it wasn't the time to think about this.

Tameiki-san kicked the ground again and the knives scattered around began to float about gently.

There were about twelve knives.

All the knives were sucked in towards Tameiki-san and, before long, they aligned themselves neatly in both her hands.

Will she throw them at me again?

Thinking about this, I put myself on guard, but Tameiki-san put the knives away and started to slowly walk towards me.

Then, she was soon in front of me raising her right hand.....and she gently stroke my head.

“Eh?”

Involuntarily, I let out a strange voice.

“That's amazing, Shion. It is a tremendous growth.

I never imaged you would improve this much upon your return.

These are some wonderful results.”

I was bewildered by Tameiki-san's unexpected behavior.

Eh? Eeh?

What's this.....

I somehow.....felt incredibly happy.

If I were a dog, I would wave my tail and run around Tameiki-san.

Why am I this happy?

“.....Right? I recklessly tried my best, after all.”

I suppressed the effeminate expression that was about to show on my face as I said those words.

I wanted her to praise me more. I wanted her to caress me more.

What is this charm of hers!?

I lost sight of my previous goal and didn't know what else to do, so I looked around restlessly.

Having done so, Tameiki-san gently embraced me.

“.....!?”

I felt another shock.

Just what is going on?

“Wh-what are?”

“I know it was tough.

You did great, Shion.

I was worried that you might have died.”

“.....”

I remembered the harsh things that happened to me during the last ten days.

Damn it! If she speaks such gentle words now, my tears will.....

“Today you should take your time and rest your body.”

She gently brushed my hair and I gradually dozed off at Tameiki-san's chest.

It felt so comfortable.....

Ah, how should I put it.....I'm glad I did my very best.

And so, my carrot-and-stick strategy got used for a different purpose, and afterwards I thoroughly became Tameiki-san's obedient apprentice.

CHAPTER 21

A SHY PRESSURE

My objective changed.

And now it is to make Tameiki-san praise me more and to make her smile.

I still do have a sub-objective I want to achieve before the training ends and that is to slip into Tameiki-san's bed.

It's not like I'm messing around.

That is also part of the process of getting stronger.

In short, I have set more goals for the same original purpose.

After I returned, I rested for an entire day, then I restarted the training.

Even though I said that she let me rest, it's not like she let me inside the camp house; I had to spend the night outside, sleeping in a sleeping bag, but Tameiki-san released a 'gravity field' around me, so I was finally able to get some real sleep.

However, I was still very tired and my body felt endlessly heavy.

Later, I even took a shower.

Tameiki-san boiled some water for me.

Even though it was a hellish hot bath and I had to endure the piercing pain caused by all the wounds on my body, I felt rather refreshed afterwards for my body was finally clean.

I threw away the tattered tuxedo I was wearing and changed into some same size clothes that Tameiki-san kept for me inside the camp house.

And so, my training entered a new stage.

The second stage started with Tameiki-san's questions.

About my ability.

Like how far can I hear, how strong a sound can I release, what are the things I learned during these ten days and so on.

Since I didn't really know yet what was the range of my hearing and the power of the sounds I could release, I gave her a broad answer to the first two questions.

I really could hear any kind of sounds.

About how strong a sound I could release, I actually didn't quite know. All I could answer was that I could release a powerful shockwave.

And about what I learned during the past ten days.

As I answered this question, I couldn't suppress the smug expression on my face.

Yes, it is unbelievable, but, before I became aware of it, I learned how to sense the sounds through my skin.

Since my sense of hearing was now sealed, if I didn't achieve something like this I couldn't have possibly survived the survival challenge.

Anyway, Tameiki-san praised me for developing the ability to sense the sounds through my skin.

With this, it has become quite easy to sense the presence of others.

After I answered a few other questions, Tameiki-san told me the purpose of the second stage of my training, and that was "To become able to turn on / off my ability".

The abilities such as mine which have a deformed type of invocation, are called permanent abilities.

A permanent ability is a burden on the body, even though you wouldn't normally realize it, and not learning to turn it on and off would shorten your life span or so it seems.

But if you train hard enough you should be able to turn it on and off at will.

When you turn it off, you become exactly like a person who doesn't have any ability.

Also, when you become able to turn it on and off, the cost performance and the quality of the ability become better and higher.

"So, what concrete things must I do in order to turn my ability on and off at will?"

"Practice. Give it some time and you'll gradually learn how to switch the state of your ability.

However, in your case, you'll have to master the on – off switching with a slightly

different method. Within three days.”

A slightly different method.

Judging by Tameiki-san’s words, she’ll make do something absurd yet again.
I’m sure of it since she demands me to master it within three days.

As I kept vigilant, Tameiki-san fetched a mat from inside the camp house and placed it on the ground, then she sat there in a seiza position.

“Take off your shoes and come here.”

What does she plan to do?

What is she going to do to me?

I continued to stay vigilant, but since Tameiki-san’s command was absolute, I obeyed her.

“Lie down here.”

I moved towards the mat and Tameiki-san pointed at her lap.

I was shocked.

“A lap pillow!?”

“Shut up. Do it already.”

“Yes.”

Eh? Eh?

Why? Why a lap pillow?

I was in a state of confusion but I, nonetheless, placed my head on her thighs and I stretched my body on the mat.

I felt a violent throbbing in my chest.

Just what the heck is she going to do to me?

I stared at Tameiki-san’s stomach region when I felt something like a syrup poured into my ear.

Then, the foreign feeling in my ear was removed.
That's right, she took off the earplug.

"Ooh!"

Since my sense of hearing suddenly returned completely, I raised my voice in spite of myself.

Amazing.

I can now hear the sounds so clearly.

"While we're at it, I might as well clean your ears."

"Eh!? For real!?"

"Quiet."

Just what is your goal, Tameiki-san!?

My tension went up because of the sudden ears clearing situation.

Moreover, it felt really good.

.....

Hmm? This is bad.....

I'm getting sleepy.....

"Wake up."

She rather harshly slapped me on my cheek and I woke up.

Drool crusted one corner of my mouth.

I then realized that I ended up drooling on Tameiki-san's trousers too.

"I-I'm sorry. I drooled....."

"Sigh....."

Don't worry about it and turn the other way."

I did as she told me to.

Then, she took off the other earplug and started to clear my other ear; after that, the one hour of supreme bliss ended.

I reluctantly parted with Tameiki-san's thighs and stood up.

Amazing. I can hear every single sound.

Tameiki-san's heartbeat. The rustle of trees. The flap of a bird's wings, flying high in the sky.

The roars of magical beasts.

The earth's pulsations.

"The truth is I wanted to make you wear these earplugs for an entire month, but you don't seem to need them anymore."

"And what are we going to do now?"

To be honest, there wasn't really necessary to take them off even though they weren't needed anymore.

There must be a reason behind taking those earplugs off.

"For now, you'll use your ability up to its limit."

"I see.

I will forcibly enter the off state of my ability.

I can't do it."

I turned around and started to run, but Tameiki-san stopped the chase in a moment with a single swift attack.

"Don't run."

"I tell you, I will really die this time.

Roll taught me that if I use my ability up to its limit, there's a high chance that I would actually die."

"It has nothing to do with it. Just do it."

"What will you do if I die?

Everything will be lost, right?

Let's clear the second stage with the take-my-time-to-learn-it strategy."

“I’ll be troubled if you die. Therefore, don’t.”

This person is saying some unreasonable things!

“I have faith in your ability to do this.”

.....

Damn it.....If she looks at me like that, I’ll be troubled.
It makes it hard for me to betray her expectations now.

“Ah, I get it.....I just have to do it, right?”

“Good boy. That’s the spirit.”

Tameiki-san said and smiled slightly as she brushed my hair.
I really wanted her to stop these gestures and facial expressions since they always startle me.

This was the second time I saw Tameiki-san’s smile.
I already got accustomed to her sour look and her gentle side, but, in spite of all this, I really wanted her to smile more.

If you praise someone’s smile, that person will smile more for you.
My good-looking best friend once said this.
Though, this might only work for good-looking guys.....

Good, I should just try and see how it goes.
Nothing bad should happen when praising people.

“Tameiki-san, you are extremely charming when you smile. Although, you almost never smile.”

“....., Is that so?”

..... Hmm? Is she actually acting shy?

Even though it was for a mere instant, but I didn’t overlook the strange light in Tameiki-san’s eyes.

“Since you are a very beautiful woman, I think that you should smile a bit more. You’re such a beautiful person after all.....
Besides, I thought about this for a long time, but your hair looks very silky.”

I saw that it was working so I pushed it even further.
I then listened carefully to Tameiki-san’s heartbeat and I realized that it was pulsing a little faster.
I looked at her face and saw that her ears had turned a little red.

As I thought.....She’s feeling shy.....!
Moreover.....It appears that she’s the type of person who becomes weak against praise!

However.
The fact that Tameiki-san is quite a kind person is not actually known inside the Anonymous, and it seems that she doesn’t even speak that much with other members. Even Roll commented once that Tameiki-san keeps a bit of a distance from them.

“You shouldn’t.....mock me too much.....”

Tameiki-san turned away from me, looking like she couldn’t endure it any longer.

This is an unexpected side of her.
I imagined that she would ward off my praise words with her cool beauty attitude, but she actually turned out to be truly adorable.

I found Tameiki-san’s unforeseen weakness, and my training motivation spiked up.

I’ll give my best.

CHAPTER 22

A NEW PRESSURE

The second stage of my training started with me courting death.

Tameiki-san took refuge high in the sky and I practiced somewhere away from the camp house; I had to use my ability up to its limit.

The sound of an explosion echoed and the shock wave made the sea of trees rustle.

I let the magical beasts and birds escape beforehand with a light threatening sound, so that I am not killing the animals pointlessly.

However, as the explosive sound resounded further away in the sea of trees, the birds in those areas all flapped their wings simultaneously.

At first, it was rather fun using my ability at its maximum, but it gradually became tough on me.

After several times of doing it over again, I lose consciousness without even realizing it. This phase is actually quite painful.

This is also when Tameiki-san comes to my help.

Then, she waits for my physical strength to return even a little and then wakes me up forcefully.

I wake up in the worst possible mood being tortured by nausea, dizziness and headaches, but these sensations lessen after a short while.

After that, Tameiki-san forces me to eat the food she prepared in order to somehow recover enough strength to move around (half of the recovery is done through pure fighting spirit from my part though).

This is not at all funny.

What Roll told me about dying if I use my ability up to its limit was in fact true.

My body felt so eroded that I really thought I would end up dead if I continued with this.

“How is it?”

Tameiki-san sneaked a look at my super groggy face.

I fell prostrate on the table placed in the open space right in front of the camp house.

It was only natural since she forced me to eat while in this groggy condition.

“How is it.....you ask? I feel so terrible that I can’t even move.....”

“Can you hear my heartbeat?”

“.....I can’t.”

“This is the off state. Your physical strength will gradually recover.

However, even when your physical strength returns completely you must preserve the off state.”

“Preserve it? How even?”

“You grow accustomed to the sensation when you don’t use your ability.

When your strength returns and you naturally start to hear things again, you challenge yourself not to hear them.

You deny your ability.”

I see.

At this point I really don’t know what I’m supposed to do, but well my ability itself is used through senses and sensations, so I’ll figure something out through the same senses and sensations.

As I thought about these things, I continued with my training.

Still, reality wasn’t that generous.

Right after my body recovers a little, I naturally start to hear sounds no matter what I do.

While my body is weak I can somehow restrain my ability completely, but once I’m recovered I can’t restrain the permanent state of my ability.

If I can’t maintain the off state, I’m forced to continue with the training.

I have to use up my ability and drive myself into a corner over and over again.

This training is taking quite some time.

Because it takes time until my physical strength recovers, I can’t practice many times over in one day.

Since this training is supposed to last for three days and nights, in one day-night cycle

I can enter the forced off state only three times.
Tameiki-san also advised me not to enter that state more than three times a day.
It appears that she thinks about me a little.

Well, still, it is a hellish experience.



The fourth time I repeated the process I got a hang of what I had to do.
The fourth time I tried it I managed to preserve the off state exceptionally longer than the third time.

I immediately informed Tameiki-san.

“That’s the way. Do your best as you continue with the training.
Think about why it did the trick this time.”

So she said. I’ll do my best as I continue with the training then.

Why did it go well?

Maybe because I did something else this time.

Up to the third time I only waited for my physical strength to return as I fell prostrate on the table, but the fourth time I forced myself to pace around.

My goal was to make myself lose consciousness and have Tameiki-san nurse me.

This wicked heart of mine helped me take a step ahead.

If I only think about my ability it has an opposite effect and I thoughtlessly enter the on state.

Instead of concentrating only on my hearing, perhaps it is more important to grasp the sensation of naturally not using it.

I continued with my training.

I had no problems with my sleeping hours since every time I used up my ability and fainted I had to sleep for a while as my body recovered.

Well, when I think about those ten days, here in this safe place even if I don’t sleep at all for three days I can still be unconcerned.

At any rate, with the fifth and sixth sessions my training started to show favorable

results.

It was during the seventh challenge that something happened.

I managed to once enter the on state from the off state and then switch back to the off state.

It only lasted for an instant though.

I wanted to immediately inform Tameiki-san, but at that time she was sleeping.

She is sound asleep in the camp house's bed even though I can't do anything else but try my utmost best to complete this training.

And yet, if I stealthily approach the camp house she instantly wakes up and prevents me from doing so.

Despite me hiding my presence and the sounds I make, just how can she even notice me!?

Well, that's all right.

In any case I can't wake Tameiki-san up.

However, this achievement of mine shouldn't be wasted. At great pains I finally got a grip of this but I now don't have Tameiki-san's advice.

What I thought about next was to challenge myself once again and see what happens when I fully release my ability this time.

My physical strength isn't fully restored though.

Tameiki-san told me that even after I recovered enough for my ability to switch to the on state, I had to rest my body for a short while.

Taking this into consideration she limited my attempts to three times per day.

The reason was the real danger I would face if I continued to reach my limit in succession.

Still, I now want to recall that sensation I just felt.

If I'm able to grasp that feeling again.....I have a hunch that I'll soon achieve my goal.

Just one more time. I'll try it just one more time.

Thinking about this I walked further away from the camp house and advanced inside the sea of trees.

Walking helps me recover to a certain extent, but the fact that I got used to this tiresome condition is somewhat of a strange story.

During this early eighth challenge, since Tameiki-san is not around to help me, I can't use my ability up to the point I lose consciousness.

I must only reduce my physical strength enough to enter the off state.

I arrived at the place where Tameiki-san gravity barrier ended and, without leaving it, I released my ability.

I can't release loud sounds for this would wake Tameiki-san up.....or this is what my previous self would have thought. However, every time I used my ability to its limit, it's not like I blindly released sounds all around me.

The sound's directionality.

Yes, I more or less became able to control the directionality of my sounds to some extent.

I still can't pinpoint something like the explosion of my sounds, but I can now sort of control the direction of the sounds I produce.

Right. By doing this I can reduce my physical strength without Tameiki-san realizing it!

This is.....quite a masochistic method of training.....

I kind of feel sad that I'm starting to enthusiastically enjoy this kind of training.

But I'm doing this in order to get stronger.

And so, I began my masochistic training.

I pointed my sounds towards the sky.

I continued to release sounds that were not actually that powerful.

I occasionally released different sounds and played with their frequencies.

This was rather fun.

Also, it appears that my sounds are not obstructed by the gravity barrier.

I thought about this while I listened to my sounds passing right through Tameiki-san's gravity barrier and spreading far away in the distance.

After that I continued to release sound after sound for a little while, and right when it became painful to continue doing so, something happened.

That thing came, easily breaking through the gravity barrier up in the sky.

CHAPTER 23

PURE PRESSURE

On a large scale, magical beasts are separated into two types.

One is the 'normal type'.

These are magical beasts that even normal humans can easily bring down, and for this reason many of them group up in order to move around.

The normal type magical beasts are further divided into species. This sea of trees is mostly inhabited by normal type magical beasts.

And the other one is the 'dragon type'.

As the name suggests, these are magical beasts which embody a dragon.

Their danger level varies, but usually most of them are brutal and harmful.

The Buried Dragon and the Edged Dragon that Roll and I defeated previously were dragon type magical beasts.

.....And now, there are also exceptions which don't fall into any of these categories.

These are 'legendary type' magical beasts.

Their power level varies as well.

There are many legendary type magical beasts which don't inflict damage to people.

However, they're all extremely dangerous magical beasts that went down in history with the name legendary. They don't even begin to compare to the average normal type and dragon type magical beasts.

But naturally, their population is scarce.

I was quietly trembling in fear.

This overwhelmingly superior existence which suddenly appeared in front of me was a legendary type magical beast; I read about it once in a book.

The lower half of its body was that of a lion, the upper half was that of an eagle; its sharp eyeballs were seizing my entire being.

It had a pair of black wings on its back, almost indistinguishable in the darkness of the night.

Its body was five times bigger than mine.

It was a Griffon.

The Griffon waved its tail, looking into me from every possible angle.

It had an overwhelmingly intimidating aura.

I stood stock still.

From the moment it easily broke through Tameiki-san's gravity barrier, I knew that I was no match for it.

My physical strength was close to the limit in the first place, so there's nothing I can do against it.

The decision I came to in an instant was to seek help from Tameiki-san.

"Ta.....a.....!"

I realized it when I opened my mouth, that my words wouldn't come out.

Was it because my physical strength was close to the limit?

No.

It was the pressure.

I was completely overwhelmed just by the fact that a Griffon was standing right in front of me.

Before I could realize it, I was plunged into silence.

I'm sure that one of the causes was also the lack of physical strength I was experiencing now.

The intimidating aura was only the trigger.

I had no power left in my body.

The Griffon slowly walked towards me.

I must escape.....!

Contrary to my thoughts, my body wouldn't move.

Move.....!

Move!

But this intimidating feeling was also the key to my problem.

I made a sharp sound and something popped inside me; the same instant I started to run.

However, before I realized it, I was already shooting through the gravity barrier and ended up pinned down on the trunk of a big tree.

I felt the shock on my back and my head slapped onto the tree trunk.

My back was hurting from the attack just now. My vision was swaying.

'Gyaaaaaaaaaa!!'

The Griffon let out a roar and I could see far back inside its throat through its opened beak. The huge eagle head was right in front of my eyes.

The Griffon's claws were eating through the tree trunk, pressing my body harder.

"Gu, gah....."

During those ten days of fierce survival, I managed to evade all the critical situations I fell into.

However, this time was different.

It was impossible to escape.

I have no means to survive a legendary type magical beast, not even by accident.

.....Wait, don't give up!

This time is the same.

There is no difference whatsoever between this and the critical situations I got over during those survival days.

I took out a knife from my holder with the only hand I had free and thrust it with all my strength into the Griffon's arm.

However, the knife only pierced through it superficially.
The Griffon didn't even quiver and kept pressing me down.

It hurts. I feel I'm being crushed.

I can just barely use my ability.
At most, I can produce a sound to drive this thing away.
Still, I was now outside the gravity barrier.
If I were to use up all my strength here I would definitely end up dead.
But I have nothing else to do but risk it and muster my strength.....!

As I was continuously crushed onto the tree trunk, I somehow sucked in the air.....and then I shouted, amplifying the sound.

"Sa-save me, Tameiki-san!!!"

My voice echoed through the sea of trees.

Apart from a little flinch, my sound attack just now didn't have any effect on the Griffon.
I'm dead.

That's what I thought, but the Griffon let go of the hand which pinned me down and slowly turned around.
I fell down on the ground, stretching out my powerless body.

It happened the next instant.

First, I saw the Griffon being blown off outside of my field of vision.
Next, I saw Tameiki-san with her black hair fluttering, landing on the ground not too far from me.

She looked at my collapsed self and rushed over.

“Are you hurt?”

“.....Ta-Tameiki-san, you came.....As expected from my master.....”

“Answer me simply. Where do you feel pain?”

“I don’t have any major.....injury. I think.....”

“I see. That’s good to hear.....”

She took a breath then stood up.

Then, she glared at the darkness which was the sea of trees.

“Wait here. I’ll come back soon.”

Tameiki-san only said this, then started to run towards the darkness.

No way! Does she plan to fight that thing?

After Tameiki-san slipped into the darkness of the night, chasing after the Griffon, thunderous roars resounded here and there in the sea of trees.

When I thought I heard sounds coming from the front, the next instant they came from somewhere behind, and the next from somewhere above.

I could not even imagine what kind of an intense fight was unfolding between Tameiki-san and that Griffon.

A few big trees collapsed with creaking sounds.

Soon the thunderous roars stopped echoing about, and Tameiki-san returned from the depth of the sea of trees, looking not even one bit disturbed.

“The Griffon’s meat has an awful taste so I haven’t left any of it behind.

However, its claws are a valuable raw material. I’ll go pick them up tomorrow.”

As I thought, she went to defeat it.

My master is amazing. I’m almost losing my heart to her.

“That Griffon played with you. I’m glad you survived.”

That thing played with me!? Such a troublesome being.

Tameiki-san lifted me up and started to walk slowly towards the camp house. Completely exhausted, I placed my head on Tameiki-san's shoulder and closed my eyes. Our bodies were glued together and it felt warm. I opened my eyes just a tiny bit and saw her hair; I couldn't stop the urge to sniff it. Yeah, it smelled really good.



With wounds all over my body I was forced to continue my training. All my injuries were covered with medicines, and after one night of rest my training restarted. My body felt heavy as always, but as soon as I recovered a tiny bit of physical strength I continued with the training.

After two days have past, I became able to more or less switch my ability on and off; all that was left to do now was to get used to it, so we entered the next stage of my training.

"The third stage will forge your dynamic vision and your reflexes to their limit."

Or so it appears.

It seems that the third stage will train my dynamic vision and my reflex to their limit.

"You can sense all the sounds around you, but you're too slow to act after you sense them.

The power to think, judge and quickly act accordingly.

This is what's you're missing.

It has no meaning whatsoever if you can hear the sounds quicker than anybody but you can't react in accordance to that."

"I see."

I thought that I fairly trained these reflexes during those ten days of survival, but it seems it was not sufficient.

But how does she plan to forge these reflexes?

In order to train someone's dynamic vision, I heard that you're usually asked to

remember the number plate of passing cars in an instant.
Will she make me look at moving things?

“I’ll be very happy with training my dynamic vision by gazing at Tameiki-san’s movements.

If this is the case, since Tameiki-san is adorable, I’m also highly motivated to do it.”

“.....We’re not gonna do that.”

She felt a little shy again. She’s too cute.

From the moment I realized this, I occasionally poked at Tameiki-san in this manner. Somehow, it looks that Tameiki-san is happier with being called cute or adorable than beautiful or pretty.

During this training, I’m always confronting with harsh situations, so doing this much should be forgivable, right?

“Then, how am I going to train?”

“You will go for another survival.”

“.....You’re joking, right?”

I felt hopelessness.

“However, this time I’m coming along.”

“Eh!?”

For real!? Awesome!

“The western region of the sea of trees you flew towards last time is inhabited by comparatively weak magical beasts.

This time we’ll go to the northern region where we can find many magical beasts with a backbone.”

“Eeh.....”

Fifteen days until my training is over. There's still a long time until then.

CHAPTER 24

PAINFUL PRESSURE

The third stage of my training appears to be something difficult to clear again. A survival challenge together with Tameiki-san. I was rather happy about this at first, but somehow, for this stage of the training, Tameiki-san will only act as a burden to me.

That's because my task for the third stage of the training is to protect Tameiki-san during the survival.

During this, Tameiki-san won't use her ability at all; she offed her ability completely.

And I have to protect this Tameiki-san who is now reduced to a frail young woman. Won't this actually be quite difficult to complete?

When Tameiki-san feels sluggish, that's when she normally sustains the gravity of the Earth.

But now she already offed her ability and she feels kind of listless. I looked at her and, without thinking, I let out a sigh.

My body felt tired due to the daily training, and another survival during which I'll have to protect Tameiki-san is just too much for me.

I was actually certain that she would be the one to protect me, but I was such a fool.

As expected, this is something Tameiki-san devised. It is definitely not decent.

"The survival will last for nine days.

I will be nothing but a burden to you, so make sure you protect me."

"A burden you say? Just how much of a burden do you plan to become?"

"If you don't provide me with food, I'll make sure to die of starvation and if a magical beast attacks me, I'll let it eat me without resisting at all.

I'll do everything in my power to become a hindrance to you."

Errr.....What the hell is she thinking!?

Is she a baby or something?

Tameiki-san ignored my dumbfounded expression and continued.

“During this survival, you’ll also have to think about me and not only about yourself. Because of the increased scope of the weight on your mind, your powers of concentration, your reflexes and your dynamic vision should improve.”

“Eeh.....Isn’t there a different way of doing this?”

In this case, I’d rather have Tameiki-san continue to do nothing but torment me. This is in itself quite harsh, but if Tameiki-san said she’ll be a burden to me, she’ll definitely act accordingly.....

I’m not confident I can overcome this.

“Because you’re risking your life, I will also risk my own life and accompany you on your training; it is the only logical thing to do, right?”

What logical thing?

I originally started this training in order not to die, and I feel like this dangerous training that might end up with me dead is mistaking the insignificant for the essential.....

Is there even a meaning to it?

.....Anyway, Tameiki-san would never listen to such a complaint; and so, we already arrived at the northern part of the sea of trees.

According to my illustrated encyclopedia, ferocious magical beasts gather close to the banks of the northern lake.

That’s why I installed the tent a little bit away from the lake’s shore.

It was a four person, rather big tent. It was the only tent I found in the camp house.

I was afraid that Tameiki-san wouldn’t allow me to take a tent for it would be too much of a luxury, but in exchange for me carrying all the luggage, she let me take anything I wanted.

I took everything that I had with me the last time, lots of canned food, an empty pet bottle, a tent and a sleeping bag.

On the way to the northern sea of trees, I had to carry a bulky luggage weighting about twenty kilograms, but it couldn't have been helped. Maybe it was luck or maybe I evaded them too well, but we haven't encountered any magical beasts along the way.

I won't have to be bothered about food for a while. With this much canned food, we should be fine for about five days.

I have a few ideas as well about the survival this time. The food is all right. I can get water from a spring not too far away from our tent. And with my scouting abilities, I can easily sense any approaching magical beasts. In short, we can confine ourselves inside the tent for five days.

And so, I left Tameiki-san inside the tent and went to get water from the nearby spring.

I left the tent holding my worn-out backpack in one hand, the same backpack that aided me during the first ten days of survival. I found the water spring on our way here, so I could easily reach it. Because I know all the locations of magical beasts, I didn't run into any of them. After I filled the empty pet bottle with fresh water, I returned to the tent.

All that's left for us now is to stay inside for five days. I'll spend five carefree days, chatting with Tameiki-san inside the tent and eating the canned food.

I am not that foolishly earnest to risk my life at every step of this training. This is a survival in the first place. Survive. Yes, continue living. It's not like Tameiki-san gave me any other specific tasks, so I'll scheme as much as it's necessary in order to complete this training with ease.

I want to get stronger. I still feel this way. However, this time Tameiki-san made a mistake. It was a failure to let me carry a tent. It appeared like a highly difficult and hellish training at first, but this time I managed to clear it quite easily.

Thinking about these things, I returned to the tent only to find Tameiki-san eating the canned food.

“What are you doing!?”

“I was hungry so I started eating.”

Tameiki-san said, and I saw about five or six empty cans scattered around her. You’re kidding, right? If she continues to eat like this, they won’t even last for three days.

I glared at Tameiki-san.

She raised an eyebrow and brought the contents of another can to her mouth.

This person.....she’s forcing herself to eat.....

Damn it, she’s doing this in order to inconvenience me. It seems that she won’t let this training become too easy for me.

“Please stop, you’ll grow fat!”

“Don’t compare me with your average woman. I move a lot.”

Tameiki-san’s hand didn’t stop.

This woman.....! She’s eating all the food that I brought with me at great pains!

I’ll tell her.....!

It’s not like I can’t fire back at her.....!

I can still say to her spiteful things.

“Go ahead and grow chubby, you good-for-nothing fatty!”

Tameiki-san reacted quick-wittedly to my reckless remark.

I immediately tried to escape, but, sadly, I was caught.

She caught one of my legs and I tumbled down inside the tent; she then stood on top of me.

“I’m sorry, forgive me, I got carried away.”

When it came to this, I had nothing else to do but apologize to her. I completely forgot that even without her ability, Tameiki-san is normally quite strong.

“I am not a fatty.”

A bang resounded inside my head.
She's quite strong.



Well, I decided to think that we were already out of food. That's because Tameiki-san will definitely eat everything I brought with me.

Also, it appears that Tameiki-san won't wait patiently inside the tent either.

Using various reasons like wanting to breathe in the outside air or wanting to drink fresh water or wanting to bathe in the sunlight, she constantly slips out of the tent.

Some way or another, she's planning to earnestly be a huge pain in the ass for me.

Whenever Tameiki-san goes outside the tent, I must be extremely vigilant.

A little while ago we encountered one magical beast, and at that time Tameiki-san really didn't do anything.

If I didn't panic and drove it away with sounds, about this time Tameiki-san would be digested inside the stomach of that magical beast.

Seeing that, I finally understood that she was seriously trying to be a burden to me.

I thought that she would at least do the minimum to preserve her own life, but without doing even that, she's putting her life on the line in order to hinder me.

During this survival, the enemy is not the magical beasts baring their fangs in the darkness of the forest, but Tameiki-san herself.

How much longer can I protect myself while keeping vigilant of Tameiki-san?

It seems that this is my task.

Only a little bit of time passed since I've started this stage of my training, and I realized how much of a burden I was to Roll.

Even though the training was designed this way, I finally understood the position of the protector.

Keeping awareness of someone other than myself is something quite difficult to do.

At present, the training isn't posing any problems.

I properly pay attention to my surroundings and I promptly drive away any magical beast that might be getting close to us, so that Tameiki-san isn't put in any danger.

I have to brace myself and do this for nine days straight, but this much is still within

the scope of my abilities.

As long as Tameiki-san won't try something herself, I can handle this.

But I was too naïve to think this way.

Tameiki-san collapsed.

There's an insect called Poisoned Butterfly.

If you breathe in its poisonous scales, you'll develop a fever at once and you'll die in about one day; it is a very troublesome insect.

This thing got me once too.

And Tameiki-san inhaled the poisonous scales of such a Poisoned Butterfly.

CHAPTER 25

THE PRESSURE OF A GUILTY MIND

If you don't quickly deal with the fever caused by the Poisoned Butterfly's poison, there's a high probability it will bring about your death.

Watching Tameiki-san stretched out on the ground with a flushed face, after sucking in all the scales of the Poisoned Butterfly, I was fairly panicking.

Her facial expression was still composed, but I actually knew.

That the poison of a Poisoned Butterfly is extremely painful. I can also hear her fast pulse.

Because I only inhaled a small dose of poisoned scales, I could deal with it by myself, but by looking at Tameiki-san's condition, she most likely inhaled a considerable amount.

"Tameiki-san, please drink some water!"

When you inhale the scales of a Poisoned Butterfly, you deal with it by drinking a large quantity of water. This is what's written in the encyclopedia.

That's also what I did.

".....I can't."

"Please, drink!"

I lifted Tameiki-san's upper body in my arms and forced her to drink the water. Some of the water dripped from her mouth.

"Please wait here. I'll go find the ingredients for mixing an antidote!"

After I covered Tameiki-san with both sleeping bags, I rushed out of the tent.

The Poisoned Butterfly's poison is an unpleasant one for it takes advantage of your own antibodies.

It penetrates your body like a parasite and generates a high fever that leads to your death.

What is therefore important is the antidote mixture. You need holly olive grass which

is effective for stopping the fever, and great sweater grass which causes your body to sweat considerably. You mash these with water until the mix becomes a muddled liquid and you have to drink an entire cup for it to be effective.

Since holly olive grass and great sweater grass grow almost everywhere, I was able to find them quickly and picked up a considerable amount of both.

Holding the two types of grass under my arms, I returned to the tent, washed an empty tin can and stuffed in the leaves of holly olive grass and great sweater grass.

I pierced the top of the plastic bottle and poured in some water, then I grabbed the rum that somehow slipped into my food luggage and mixed it in as well.

“Ha.....ha.....”

When I heard Tameiki-san’s rough breathing I started to panic.
She definitely inhaled those poisoned scales on purpose.

I took a deep breath then continued to stir the mixture. I can’t loosen my vigilance outside the tent either.

After a while, the contents inside the tin can become muddled. An offensive grass-smelling scent hanged in the air.

However, she can drink it now.

I helped Tameiki-san sit up and brought the can to her mouth.

“.....I can’t do it anymore.”

“What are you saying! This will most likely help you if you drink it, so please hold on!”

“My body feels powerless.....I already exceeded my limit.....”

As I thought, she’s doing this on purpose!

Moreover, if she can afford to talk, she can definitely drink!

I continuously pressed Tameiki-san to drink the antidote.

However, she kept her mouth sealed, not wanting to open it.

Don’t tell me that.....she just doesn’t want to drink it...

“Why don’t you drink it!? Please don’t say because it looks disgusting!”

“It looks disgusting. I can’t drink something like that.”

Damn it! Precisely as I thought!

Besides, frankly, she’s still rather composed, isn’t she?

But that can’t be. I was very close to dying after I inhaled only a small amount of poisoned scales.

The truth is Tameiki-san’s breathing is still rough and her pulse is still fast.

And yet, why does she act so composed?

Is there another way of saving her without forcing her to drink the antidote?

Nope, there isn’t.

It’s definitely better to make her drink it.

Then what the hell is she doing when she’s so close to dying!?

“Please, do me a favor and drink this!”

“I can’t drink that.”

“.....

Is that so? In this case.....”

I also have an idea, you know?

I took a mouthful of the muddy antidote and held it in my mouth, then I pressed my mouth onto Tameiki-san’s.

Yes, it was mouth-to-mouth feeding.

This way, I can force her to drink it.

If she gets mad afterwards it can’t be helped.

Ah, my first kiss.....

Why does it have to be like this!?.....I wonder if this is Tameiki-san’s first kiss as well?

Sigh.....

I’m quite a romanticist.

“Ugh.....fu.....!”

Her eyes closed and her mouth sealed, when I started to feed her the antidote,

Tameiki-san opened her eyes in astonishment.
Her body trembled slightly because of the shock and her pulse accelerated even more.
Tameiki-san's lips were warm and soft.
However, the nauseously bitterness of the liquid present in my mouth was ruining everything.

“Ugh.....ngh.....”

Tameiki-san's nasal breathing tickled my face.
Although she didn't resist, there was no sign of accepting the antidote either.
Well, if she continues to act like this, I will thoroughly go along with it as well.
Excepting the bitterness of the antidote, the rest is nothing but rewarding.

After a while, seeing that I wouldn't give up no matter how much time passed, Tameiki-san gave in.
She accepted the bitter antidote and started to swallow it.

Even though 'injected' is quite an unpleasant way of describing it.....for the time being, I injected all the antidote inside my mouth into hers, then released her.

“.....Ha.....ha.....You”

“There are two mouthfuls left! Excuse me!”

“Ngh.....!”

I was already in despair.
I, once again, fed Tameiki-san the antidote.
She closed her eyes, inclined her face to the side and drank it up.

“Ha....., haa.....
All right, it was my fault.....So, please do it slower....., let me drink it slowly.....”

Because of the fever, Tameiki-san's face was bright-red.
Her heart was pounding violently as well.
She's seriously ill.
I must hurry and make her drink all the antidote.

I drew near in order to mouth-to-mouth feed her again.

“.....Wait, Shion. Please wait.....”

“What is it?”

“.....It’s too embarrassing, so you should close your eyes too.....”

“Understood.”

I lied.

Most likely this is the first and last time I am able to see Tameiki-san’s cute face from this close.

There’s no way I’ll miss the chance.

I held in my mouth the last mouthful of antidote and kissed Tameiki-san, keeping my eyes slightly opened. Her eyes closed, she received the liquid.

Since she told me to do it slowly, I slowly poured the antidote into Tameiki-san’s mouth.

As Tameiki-san slowly swallowed the antidote, I don’t know what she was thinking about but she placed one hand on my back, surrounding it.

Maybe she just couldn’t support her body anymore. Because of this situation, the gesture was not even romantic.

Before long, I transferred all the liquid in my mouth into Tameiki-san’s, then I parted from her.

Likely because she used up all her strength, she threw down her body with a flop.

“Shion.....you little.....You did it this time.....”

Staring dimly at the tent roof, Tameiki-san said to me.

Her face was still red and her pulse still fast. It’s not like the antidote works immediately.

“Forgive me. But all that’s left now is to warm up your body and rest.

Because you will most likely sweat a lot, I’ll hurry to bring you some water.”

“Understood.....”



After she drank the antidote, Tameiki-san's fever started to go down. She sweat so abundantly that I had to constantly wipe her dry. I only wiped the nape of her neck and her face, since she would probably get mad if I were to wipe the rest of her body too.

After about two hours, she stopped sweating and, looking a bit better, I asked her to changed her clothes. Of course, I didn't watch her doing it. I waited outside the tent.

Next, as a reaction to the holly olive grass, Tameiki-san developed intense shivers, so I helped her getting inside the sleeping bag. I gave her even my spare clothes to wear, so she was perfectly equipped.

It was already night.
A period of time when magical beasts become rather active.
Inside the tent, I kept being vigilant.
I camouflaged the tent with all sorts of dry leaves, so even if magical beasts get close to it, they probably won't attack. I didn't use any light either.
Still, it is best to be cautious.

"I'm cold. I'm way too cold."

I shrunk my body in one corner of the tent as I stayed alert of the outside situation when I heard Tameiki-san murmur.

She wears so many extra clothes and she's still cold?
We're in a desert area so it is colder during night time, but it appears that the side effects of the holly olive grass are greater than I expected.
Maybe I used too many leaves. Anyway, the shivers should disappear soon too.

"Shion"

"Yes"

"I'm cold, so come here."

“Okay?”

“Get inside here.”

“Inside the sleeping bag? It’s too tight for us both.”

“You’ll fit. Come.”

“Eh.....”

I’m not really that eager right now.

Still, my ultimate goal was to secretly sneak into Tameiki-san’s bed when she sleeps.

Because it was pitch dark, I couldn’t see Tameiki-san’s face.

“Hurry up.”

“All right, all right.”

I stooped to where Tameiki-san lay.

“Come inside. Can you see?”

“I can’t.”

“It’s here.”

“Ah, understood. Wait, I can’t fit in there.

Two bodies inside a single person sleeping bag is overdoing it.”

“We’ll fit. Hurry up, I’m cold.”

I somehow managed to get inside the sleeping bag, but it was extremely crowded; Tameiki-san and I were now glued to each other. There’s no way I can turn over, or even move.

Tameiki-san’s soft body twined itself around me and it felt good.

It was extremely warm as well. A little wet too because of all the sweating.

“You’re warm. You’re a great human pillow.”

“This is a normal body temperature though.”

Tameiki-san hugged me tightly, and I desperately tried to hold back my seething erection.

I’ll gladly become Tameiki-san’s human pillow.

“.....Shion, you easily fed me that antidote mouth-to-mouth. Do you have such experience?”

“No, I don’t. It was my first kiss.”

Though, I’d rather not count it as a kiss.

“I see. Mine too.

Well, I’ve done artificial respiration a few times before.

But only to women.”

It appears that Tameiki-san didn’t have any men in her life until now.

Well, she’s too scary, this Tameiki-san.

For some reason, I managed to rather quickly open her heart; she’s still scary but not like before.

“And you offered your first kiss to me, huh?”

“You were in a state of emergency. If it weren’t for that, everything would’ve been like a perfect reward.”

“.....Don’t tell me you like me!”

“Eh? Well, I like you very much, of course.”

She’s teaching me all sorts of things and she’s kind sometimes; and she’s beautiful as well.

She forces you to play with death, but she’s truly a great master.

“I see. You like me.....”

Somehow, Tameiki-san's embrace got stronger.

"I'll sleep now."

"All right. Good night."

I can't fall asleep. That's because I have to stay alert to what happens outside. Despite being in a warm and comfortable place, not being able to fall asleep is like torture.

A short time later, I heard Tameiki-san's sleeper's breathing. She fell asleep while embracing me.

I somehow managed to turn over and was now lying on my back, face up. Then, I took the liberty to rub Tameiki-san's breasts to some extent.

Today's nursing charge and annoyance fee.

CHAPTER 26

THE PRESSURE OF GIVING UP

My training continued.

During the last seven days, Tameiki-san kept interfering with me without fail, but I protected her nonetheless.

The most difficult situation was with the Poisoned Butterfly's scales.

Because Tameiki-san went by herself to inhale the poisonous scales, there was no way to avoid it.

During these seven days, I had to intervene with an antidote three times. About the third time, maybe she developed antibodies or something, but Tameiki-san wasn't in such pain anymore. Her symptoms softened instantly.

That's why I declared to her that I will absolutely not treat her the next time she does this on purpose.

There are two more days left of this training which only messed with my sleeping time. I find it rather difficult to continue now.

Besides, since that mouth-to-mouth antidote feeding, I have the feeling that Tameiki-san had been awfully clingy.....

Having said that, when our eyes meet, she turns away, and she enters weird moods without any clear explanation.

This feeling.....Did she perhaps fall in love with me?

.....Well, as one would expect, that is not the case.

Tameiki-san would never fall for a kid like me, and there was nothing to fall in love with in the first place.

Not much time passed since we actually met each other. And it's not like we have a strong relationship either.

Tameiki-san, did you perhaps fall in love with me?

If I were to ask her such an arrogant thing, she would definitely knock me off my feet.

On the other hand, I only need another push and she'll snatch my heart away.

Tameiki-san's mature charm is too harsh on an unpopular guy like me. It's a menace.

It makes me misunderstand stuff.

However, through our relationship as master and apprentice, I can perfectly feel the love she pours into me as my master.

I am confident that, having to survive for this long, I have certainly become stronger. I managed to increase the scope of things I can do with my ability and, above all, I boosted my endurance and my mental strength.

Maybe it's only natural to become like this when forced to play with death all the time. Anyway, my body is thoroughly worn-out. Because Tameiki-san won't let me rest, I can't recover my strength at all.

My body feels so heavy that I find it difficult even to walk; in any case, my strength now is very low.

Anyway, I have two more days of the third stage, then, after one day of rest, the fourth stage will start where she'll make me do something again, but after that we'll return home.

In short, my training will be over soon!

I did it.....

Still, there are many things to feel anxious about once I go back.

First, I neglected all the promises to go out with Tsurugi and the others, I left my home without saying anything for an entire month.....and I didn't finish most of the homework I had to do this summer.

I hope the Boss did the proper arrangements in this area though.

Also, what I mustn't forget about is Roll's existence.

Roll is dangerous.

After I promised her that I'll go visit every day, I left without saying a single word to her.

Even I would get angry in that situation.

I tried to steal Tameiki-san's phone several times in order to send a message to Roll, but it didn't work.

But I will return stronger, so Roll will probably be pleased about it too.

And maybe she's already been told that someone selfishly tool me along to train me.

Anyway, I decided to think about my apology to her while I still had the time.
Roll will surely forgive me.

Well, this training damaged me in all such aspects.

I have to try my best a little more! Right when I started to feel enthusiastic about it, it happened that my training stopped two days before ending the third stage.

I thought that we would halfway finish with the third stage and enter the fourth one right away, but it wasn't like that.

The training itself was over.

"No, no, I will stay here and continue with my training.

I hate doing things half-heartedly.

I want to decisively complete it!"

"You can't. The training is over."

At this time, I clang to a large tree and didn't let it go.

"I'm telling you, this is unreasonable! Why don't you go back by yourself, Tameiki-san!"

"Then, I won't have to come back and pick you up once you finished, right?"

"Damn.....That's mean!"

"Be quiet and follow me."

This was the situation.

In the middle of the third stage, Tameiki-san's phone's unsuitable ringtone resounded inside the sea of trees.

It was a call from the Boss.

It was about a mission request.

A unit, from one of our branch offices, accompanying a car which transported some goods was attacked by the SDF.

If the goods which were supposed to arrive at one of our development bases were to be destroyed now, it would mean a hard blow for Anonymous and on top of that, depending on the situation, there's a high change that our development base would be discovered as well.

Therefore, Tameiki-san must give urgent reinforcements and she has to go escort the car and the goods.

The difficulty degree is S+.

Tameiki-san is a fundamentally free person, so she only takes on missions upon request. She herself said that she never goes to pick missions by herself.

Also, she never does missions lower than A.

I obviously believed that I would be nothing but a burden to her during this mission, so I invited her to go do it by herself as I continued with my training, but Tameiki-san shaded me; I actually don't understand what she was thinking about.

Still, it was less a shading and more of a forceful taking along.

"Really now, please give me a break.

I actually want to finish with my training, you know?

I don't like being half-hearted."

"Then the last stage will be '*Come with me on my mission*'. What do you say now?

There's no problem this way."

Ah, she'll take me with her no matter what.

Sigh, it's futile to oppose Tameiki-san.

".....All right. I'll just come along then."

"Good.

We'll go back to the camp house first."



Once we returned to the camp house, both Tameiki-san and I took a quick shower, then we changed into new tuxedos.

Tameiki-san immediately finished her preparations and collected all the stuff into one big attache case.

"The battle front where the branch office unit was apprehended is the mountain trail on Mt. Jesa. It's right after we cross the desert.

It's probably a guerrilla warfare situation. We're the closest to the branch office, so we

will be their reinforcement.

There are others coming to the rescue as well, and I believe they'll be arriving soon, but we should also expect that they'll be completely under suppression by the time we get there.

We complete the mission by either securing the goods before reaching the tunnel at the end of the mountain trail, or by completely exterminating the SDFs."

"Right. I'll leave those things to you."

"Are you stupid? You're the one who'll do everything.

In a guerrilla warfare situation, there's no one better than you.

It's more efficient than my way."

"Wait.....!"

She grasped my arm firmly and we took a great leap in the sky. I could see far ahead, and I immediately discovered Mt. Jesa.

Nevertheless, we're falling now. Did she point the gravity vector in that direction?

But this doesn't even shock me anymore. It's just Tameiki-san's acrobatic floating ability.

"Don't worry. If it gets extremely dangerous, I'll help you."

"Please help me before it gets extremely dangerous!!"

"I'll start moving if any obstacles in completing the mission show up."

"As I said.....!"

Tameiki-san increased the speed.

Taken by surprise, I clang to Tameiki-san's waist.

Damn it!

As always, it's like she doesn't even hear me!

Besides, the wind is awful!

But Tameiki-san is wearing goggles; What the hell, give me a pair too!

Shit, I can't keep my eyes opened.

All I can do now is to bury my face in Tameiki-san's abdomen.
I'll sniff her just to show her.

"After taking that shower, you smell really good, Tameiki-san!"

Covering my face, I breathed in and out into Tameiki-san's abdomen.
She shivered a little.

"Stop it. It tickles."

I didn't. Moreover, I increased my sniffing speed.
As one would expect, she hit me because of that.

CHAPTER 27

SORROWFUL PRESSURE

Mt. Jesa.

A mountain 4,600 m high.

The spiraling mountain road which started at the base of Mt. Jesa pierced through the mountain and reached the city of Sentoseria.

Sentoseria is a metropolis where the SDF have their headquarters.

Almost no one uses this road to reach Sentoseria though.

That's because a beautiful highway across the valley was built.

This road crossing the mountain was long since it became abandoned, so its current condition was not too great.

That's why most of the people now use the beautiful road across the valley, but using this road to transport our goods was a little bit problematic.

It led to Sentoseria too. Therefore, many SDF vans passed this road on a regular basis. So it'll be problematic to transport Anonymous' goods using this road.

We could use smugglers or transportation services provided by other underground organisations, but precisely because we operate in the shadows in the first place, no one wants to use that royal road.

If they found us there, we would be dead in an instant.

Currently, Tameiki-san and I found a car, actually stole it, and were driving it on the mountain road.

We advanced for a while and saw that the SDF were blocking the road somewhere in the distance.

Tameiki-san stopped the car in front of the SDF patrol car, then the SDF soldier knocked on the driver side's window.

Will this be all right, I wondered, since we both wore our tuxedos.

"Shion, let's get off."

Tameiki-san resolutely ignored the SDF guy as she opened the door. Then she got off the car.

I hurried to get off as well and followed after Tameiki-san.

"A brutal magical beast showed up in this area so this road is currently closed."

The SDF guy stood in front of sand said this, but Tameiki-san ignored him again and

walked passed him.

“Hey you.....”

The SDF man grabbed Tameiki-san shoulder after she purposely disregarded him and walked ahead.

He unfortunately grabbed her shoulder.

The SDF guy became one with the earth's surface.

His blood splashed at her feet and it even reached mine.

The other SDF personnel who saw this happen, prepared for battle right away, but they, one by one, were smashed to the ground.

“Uwaa.....”

In a mere instant their bodies become nothing but lumps of meat, but I averted my eyes and followed after Tameiki-san.

She doesn't show any mercy.....

“Shion, it's about time you put on your mask.

I'm not worried if my face is seen, but this doesn't apply to you.”

“All right.”

Tameiki-san waited for me to put my mask on, then she put on those cool black groves of hers and got on the SDF's patrol car.

I also got on the passenger's seat.

The car started running.

“Do you understand the situation?”

Tameiki-san asked me, as she displayed a skilful driving technique, continuously rotating the steering wheel.

She drove the car with an insanely high speed, despite the rough road.

“.....It is a bit strange. I can't hear any battle sounds nor running cars sounds.

I can hear voices of people, but at this distance I can't make up the contents.....”

“Then, they might already be suppressed.”

“.....Maybe you're right.”

Am I the one responsible for doing something about this.....?

But it's impossible for me.

Thinking about this, I looked through the window half in despair.

Because the speed was too great, the scenery passed quickly as well.

However, my eyes stopped on one particular scenery.

“Ta-Tameiki-san, look!”

I pointed outside the window and said this, and Tameiki-san urgently pressed the

brake and stopped the SDF's patrol car.

Her eyes already followed the direction of my pointed finger.

"....."

"Is that a.....corpse?"

Yes. An SDF man wearing camouflaged clothes was impaled on a long, standing tree branch.

Looking around, we caught sight of other corpses here and there.

"Aside from SDFs, there are corpses of our people as well."

On the road, trees and guardrail, marks of a recent battle still remained.

"It was quite the flashy battle."

"Not really.

Look carefully at the corpses."

"Eh?"

I did what I was told and looked at the dead bodies.

Apart from being utterly grotesque, I thought they looked like normal corpses; was there something else about them?

"Our people and the SDF guys alike died of the same kind of wounds.

Magical beasts?.....No. There's a high probability that a third party intervened here."

".....Eh, for real?"

"Yeah. It's quite the trouble, so I should probably take care of this mission by myself after all.

This is too big a responsibility for you."

Tameiki-san only said this, then she got on the car again and took off.

Lucky me.

If Tameiki-san takes care of things here, there's nothing to worry about.

I don't know who did this, but I felt gratitude towards the third party which intervened.

Perhaps I should show more concern or nervousness for this mission.

It's not too good to rely on Tameiki-san.

We advanced for a while, and the Anonymous' cars column transporting the goods came in sight.

The cars were lined up in front of the tunnel, engines not running.

There was no one inside them.

However, the luggage was still piled up on the cars' roof racks.

"What is this?"

I asked and Tameiki-san silently covered her ears.

".....!"

A bit slowly, but I understood Tameiki-san's intention and I released a huge roaring

sound.

The sound echoed inside the forest.

I concentrated my mind.

Two people on a tree and one above in the sky.

The sudden explosive sound disturbed their breathing and heartbeats.

They were so honed that without concentrating my senses I couldn't hear them at all.

Tameiki-san paid attention to my eyes.

Up, left, left.

I conveyed to her the location of the enemy with my eyes, then a sound reverberated with a 'thud'.

I watched as the trees to my left side got crushed to the ground and the birds flying up in the sky got smashed dead on the ground as well.

"Ah. Quite the troublesome ones intervened this time."

Tameiki-san said and sighed deeply.

However, I understood from the pressure she gave of now that she sharpened her senses.

She couldn't bring down the three enemies with her first attack.

Right, they evaded it just now.

They sensed that their location was discovered, and had the discernment and reflexes to immediately avoid Tameiki-san's attack.

They're skilled.

Then, three voices showed up above our heads and their possessors landed in order, surrounding us.

"Waaaaao! An amazing big-shot in such a place! And here I thought that some more SDF weak reinforcements arrived, but isn't this Taaameiki-san!"

"Eh!? It's a lie, right!? 'Gravity' 1!?"

"It's true! Amazing, it's the real deal! I'm a big fan of yours!"

A trio with quite the showy appearances showed up.

Their faces were hidden behind Venetian masks, and counting from the right, they were a man, a woman and another man.

Since I couldn't see their faces, I didn't know their ages.

What's with these guys.....

Thinking about this, I took a vigilant attitude.

From the moment they avoided Tameiki-san's attack I knew that these enemies were stronger than me.

I immediately got closer to Tameiki-san.

Tameiki-san moved faster than anyone.

The terrain under the trio's feet changed.

The three sensed the upcoming attack beforehand, so they evaded it, and were now fluttering about in the sky.

Tameiki-san then launched a knife attack.

They evaded knife after knife after knife; their battle was a defensive one.

Still, their voices sounded rather cheerful.

"This! Isn't it that the likes of us can't actually win this!?"

"Ahaha! That's true!"

"Gyahaha! How do we run away! Do something!"

"Let just the two of us get away with your ability!"

"I'll die then, won't I!?"

"It's all right! Die for me!"

"You're horrible!? Wait, a knife stuck my arm! Wait! Help!"

"Yup, you've been hit!"

"That knife came from you! Because you're extremely clumsy at this!"

"Formation C!"

" "Roger!" "

The trio moved around carefreely, evading the knives with cheery voices, then they suddenly stopped.

They stopped, but when it looked like Tameiki-san was about to catch the whole herd with one last throw, contrary to expectations, the trio disappeared.

What was left behind was Tameiki-san's pressing and the thrown knives.

Those guys disappeared in a mere instant.

"They ran away."

".....I can't believe you couldn't finish them off."

"My normal self would've killed them with the first strike.

Maybe because I repeatedly inhaled the Poisoned Butterfly's scales, my physical strength is not completely restored.

I couldn't use my full power."

You reap what you sow, sister.

"Besides, who the heck were those guys?"

"They were members of the Nursery Rhymes.

They're not as big as Anonymous, but they're also an organisation opposing the SDF.

We're in the same business, so to speak.

They have few members, but most of them are powerful. Their trademark is the Venetian mask and the showy clothes."

"I see.....There are such things too."

The underground world sure is vast.

When it came to evil organisations, I only knew about Anonymous, but when I asked the others, I found out that there were various other ones too.

Ours is so popular, probably because we sometimes act in the open as well.

“Anyway, I’ll report to Heid.”

Tameiki-san took out her work phone from a pocket and called the Boss.

‘Tameiki?’

The Boss’ voice resounded through the phone.

Due to my ability, I could clearly hear phone conversations too.

“Yeah. We completed the mission, but the transportation unit was wiped out. It was the Nursery Rhymes.”

‘Those guys again? How many did you kill?’

“Zero. I felt a little sick.”

That’s an awful pretext.

‘I see.

Recently, those guys have started to fool around way too much.

It might be the time to strike them.’

“You’re right.”

‘I’ll send some reinforcements from the branch office to escort the goods.

Please stay there for a little bit.’

“Understood.”

She hung up.

Tameiki-san placed her work phone in the pocket again, she unfastened two buttons from her shirt and got in the patrol car.

She then let her seat down, linked her hands at her back and closed her eyes.

“Shion, I leave the lookout to you. I’m tired, so I’ll sleep.

Wake me up if anything happens.”

I couldn’t answer her something like I’ll attack her if she intended to sleep so defencelessly, so I said ‘Yes’ instead.

It appears that my master was a bit irritated by the fact that she couldn’t finish those guys off.

Maybe I should’ve attacked too.

My reactions were fast enough, but I couldn’t move for I would’ve gotten in Tameiki-san’s way.

Anyway, we more or less completed the mission.

I didn’t do anything though.



Thus, my training finished with an incomplete feeling.

“This, is this for real?”

We rested our bodies for two days in that branch office, and were now on the road leading to the city of Slayseid where the branch office was located, when Tameiki-san made a very serious announcement.

I did think it was strange.

Even though all my wounds healed during the time we stayed here, the sluggishness didn't go away.

It was a suffocating feeling.

I thought it was because of muscle pain or fatigue due to the training, but it wasn't anything like that.

“Didn't you realise it?

You're a fool.”

“No, no. You normally don't realise these things!”

“Normally you do realise. When your own body becomes heavier.”

Right. It appears that Tameiki-san increased the gravity affecting me during the whole period of my training.

She slowly increased the load without me realising it, until the burden on my body finally reached 1.5 times the normal amount.

Without me noticing it, she restricted me.

“Well, anyway, I'll withdraw it now.”

Tameiki-san said and my body instantly became lighter.

“Uoo!? Amazing! My body feels incredibly light!”

“Fufu, right?”

“Somehow, I feel like I've become much, much stronger!”

“You did become fairly stronger.”

“Really!?”

“Yeah.

Anyway, with this, your training has ended for the time being.”

My ears moved with a twitch.

For the time being?

What did she mean, for the time being?

“Well, I shall refrain. I don't want to go through a second similar training ever again.”

“We won't do that kind of training again.

What you're lacking now is actual fighting experience.

Send me your schedule. I'll shade you when you're free."

"Eh, Ehh.....

I would warmly welcome a date though....."

".....That's not such a bad idea either."

Dumbfounded by her reply, I turned around to face her.

"Eh!? Is that all right!?"

"Shut up. It was a joke."



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